

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /051 W

----- 059694

R 291010Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7398

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 11071

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SOPN, IN

SUBJECT: PRESSURE TIGHTENS ON REMAINING DISSIDENCE IN THE PRESS

1. HAVING CLOSED DOWN SEVERAL SMALL VERNACULAR AND ENGLISH-LANGUAGE OPPOSITION PAPERS IN GUJARAT AND BOMBAY TWO WEEKS AGO AND IMPOSED PRE-CENSORSHIP ON THE PRESTIGIOUS INTELLECTUAL BIMONTHLY SEMINAR IN DELHI LAST WEEK(RESULTING IN THE PUBLISHER DECIDING TO CEASE PUBLICATION), INCREASING PRESSURES ARE AGAIN BEING APPLIED TO THE STATESMAN AND INDIAN EXPRESS. SEMINAR'S DIFFICULTY AROSE AS A RESULT OF THE JULY ISSUE INCLUDING A WHOLE SERIES OF ARTICLES BY PROMINENT INDIAN SCHOLARS WHICH WERE BITTERLY CRITICAL OF THE EMERGENCY,AND THE ADVERTISEMENT OF THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE ON "FREEDOM AND FEAR." SEMINAR WAS PRINTED BY THE STATESMAN'S DELHI PRESS AND CHARGES OF PUBLICATION OF OBJECTIONABLE MATERIALS HAVE BEEN MADE BY GOVT AGAINST THE STATESMAN AS A RESULT.

2. CONGEN CALCUTTA TELLS US THAT A SENIOR STAFF MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS (R) AFFILIATED JUGANTAR AND AMRIT BAZAR PATRIKA GROUP TOLD A FRIEND THIS WEEK OF A RECENT REMARK BY WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER S.S. RAY TO THE EFFECT THAT STATESMAN MANAGING DIRECTOR IRANI WOULD SOON BE BEHIND BARS UNDER MISA. THE CONGEN GIVES CREDENCE TO THE REPORT OF RAY'S  
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STATEMENT EVEN IF IT WAS ONLY MEANT AS A WARNING TO IRANI.

THE CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION IN DELHI HAS HEARD THAT THE GOI IS MAKING PLANS TO CLOSE DOWN THE DELHI EDITION OF THE PAPER ALTOGETHER, USING THE PRINTING OF SEMINAR AS THE PRETEXT.

3. IN ADDITION, THIS WEEK SAW A SERIES OF MAJOR PRESS STORIES RECOUNTING FINANCIAL AND TAX CRIMES ATTRIBUTED TO INDIAN EXPRESS OWNER GOENKA. LAST FALL, AS A RESULT OF GOI AND CONGRESS PRESSURE, GOENKA TURNED THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE EXPRESS BOARD OF DIRECTORS OVER TO K.K. BIRLA (ACTING AS UNOFFICIAL AGENT FOR THE GOI) BUT DID NOT AGREE TO ALL THE GOI'S NOMINEES FOR NEW BOARD MEMBERS. AS A RESULT, BIRLA HAS APPARENTLY NOT BEEN ABLE TO EXERT EFFECTIVE CONTROL OVER THE EXPRESS PAPERS WHICH HAVE CONTINUED TO RUN QUITE BOLD ARTICLES ON THE EMERGENCY (E.G., NEW DELHI 9553). IT APPEARS THAT THE GOVT HAS DECIDED TO INCREASE ITS PRESSURE ON GOENKA AND TO THREATEN TO DESTROY COMPLETELY HIS BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS (ALREADY IN SERIOUS CASH-FLOW TROUBLE). WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE INDIAN EXPRESS IS HAVING INCREASING DIFFICULTY MEETING ITS MONTHLY PAYROLL.

4. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF OTHER SMALLER PAPERS AROUND WHICH CONTINUE TO PICK AWAY AND GRIPE AT THE GOI AND ITS POLICIES, INCLUDING MAHATMA GANDHI'S GRANDSON'S WEEKLY HIMAT. IF THE GOI'S PRESENT TACTICS CONTINUE, WE WOULD EXPECT TO FIND THEM ALL UNDER STEADILY INCREASING HEAT OR BEING SHUT DOWN FLAT. PERHAPS MOST INTERESTING IN THIS RESPECT IS THE REPORTING GOI ORDER CLOSING DOWN THE ONLY CPI NEWSPAPER IN KERALA, THE MALAYALAM-LANGUAGE JANAYUG (FOR PRINTING A REPORT OF A COMMUNAL DISTURBANCE IN QUILON IN KERALA). THIS WILL BE THE FIRST CPI PAPER CLOSED IN INDIA IF THE MOVE, WHICH AS USUALLY RELIABLE KERALA CORRESPONDENT TOLD US ABOUT JULY 28, IS TAKEN IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. OTHER CPI PUBLICATIONS, PARTICULARLY THE WEEKLIES NEW AGE AND MAINSTREAM HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY TESTY AND CRITICAL IN RECENT WEEKS OF GOVT PROGRAMS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WITH WHICH SANJAY GANDHI IS ASSOCIATED, SUCH AS THE RESETTLEMENT OF SLUM-DWELLERS IN DELHI. WE ARE LESS SURE THAT THE GOVT WOULD MOVE AGAINST THESE NATIONAL JOURNALS, BUT THE CLOSING OF JANAYUG, IF IT MATERIALIZES, COULD BE A WARNING TO THE CPI THAT ITS OTHER LOCAL AND REGIONAL JOURNALS WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

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SHUT DOWN IF THE COMMUNISTS CONTINUE THEIR SNIPING.

5. OUR CORRESPONDENT SOURCES TELL US THAT THERE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A CLEAR TIGHTENING OF GOVT PRESSURES ON THE PRESS AND ON CORRESPONDENTS SINCE THE END OF JUNE. IN SEPTEL WE WILL BE DESCRIBING EVIDENCE OF POLITICAL NERVOUSNESS AND HARDENING OF GOVT POLICY IN OTHER SECTORS OF SOCIETY AS WELL.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** CENSORSHIP, THE PRESS, DISSIDENT FACTIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 29 JUL 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** vogelfj  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976NEWDE11071  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760293-0988  
**From:** NEW DELHI  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t1976079/aaaaahsc.tel  
**Line Count:** 116  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** vogelfj  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 08 JUN 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <08 JUN 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <05 OCT 2004 by vogelfj>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** PRESSURE TIGHTENS ON REMAINING DISSIDENCE IN THE PRESS  
**TAGS:** SOPN, IN  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006